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NT 520 Introduction to the New Testament

Kenneth D. Litwak

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NT520 New Testament
Asbury Theological Seminary
Fall 2004
Kenneth D. Litwak, Ph.D.

THIS IS A DRAFT, SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENTS

Welcome

Greetings. Welcome to NT520. I look forward to sharing with you our exploration of the New Testament. Take some time to get familiar with our syllabus and the layout of our course. The Introductory Module will be located in the Course Center. This is the same location where I will be placing the other assignments in the future. After familiarizing yourself with the course, please share some information about yourself on your résumé as part of the first assignment. In a traditional class setting I always pass out a student survey on the first day and then ask each student to share a few categories which help us to get to know them better. This first exercise will give you the opportunity to share in this fashion with the rest of the class on your résumé.

About Me

I have a B.A. in Religion from Vanguard University, an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in New Testament studies from the University of Bristol. My doctoral studies focused on Luke-Acts. I began my graduate study at the Graduate Theological Union, where Joel B. Green was my advisor. When he left GTU to go to Asbury, I changed schools as well, and earned my Ph.D. as an external student at Trinity College (University of Bristol). Joel Green served as my external advisor, while my supervisor in Bristol was John Nolland. My current day job is that of a software engineer for Azusa Pacific University in southern California. My wife, Amanda, and I have three children: Matthew, age thirteen, Wesley, age eleven, and Daniel, age eight.

I have taught several courses in religion over the Internet for Southwestern College in Wichita, KS, but this is my first time teaching in ExL for Asbury. Prior to that, I spent many years as a technical trainer for Sun Microsystems. Teaching New Testament, however, has been my goal for many years, so I'm excited about this course.

Although this is my first time teaching an ExL course, other Asbury professors and support staff have provided a wealth of information and successful approaches to these courses which I have attempted to incorporate in this class. Additionally, I am an avid reader of books and articles on the practice of teaching over the Internet. Nevertheless, I am very interested in any ideas regarding how to make this learning experience more valuable to you. I see my own vocational calling as that of an "equipper," so I am always open to new ways to help you learn. This means that our interactions will, I hope, be educational for all of us.

Contacting the Professor and Office Hours

Email: Please post general questions to me in the Discussion Center of our course. Just as in a traditional classroom, it often benefits the entire class to hear and interact with the answer to these questions. When you need to send personal emails, send them to me by clicking on the Office icon in the NT520 folder. I am the only one who will view these materials. If you have an urgent matter, please flag your email with the word "Urgent" in the subject line.

Email address:

Kenneth.Litwak@asburyseminary.edu

During the course please direct all email to the NT520 Course Office

Online Office Hours: MWF 12:00-1:00 PM PST

Telephone: 408-806-0869 (cell)

Office Hours: I will check for messages every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 12-1 PM PST. I plan on checking in sometime every day but Sunday. I will respond to correspondence in the order in which it was received. In reviewing class discussions and postings, I will read all of the entries which are posted, but I will not necessarily respond to all postings. I will, however, be sure to respond to each of you each week. If the need arises, we can also arrange times to chat or to speak via telephone by special appointment. Just let me know if you would like to schedule this and when you might be available for questions and/or conversation.

Course Description

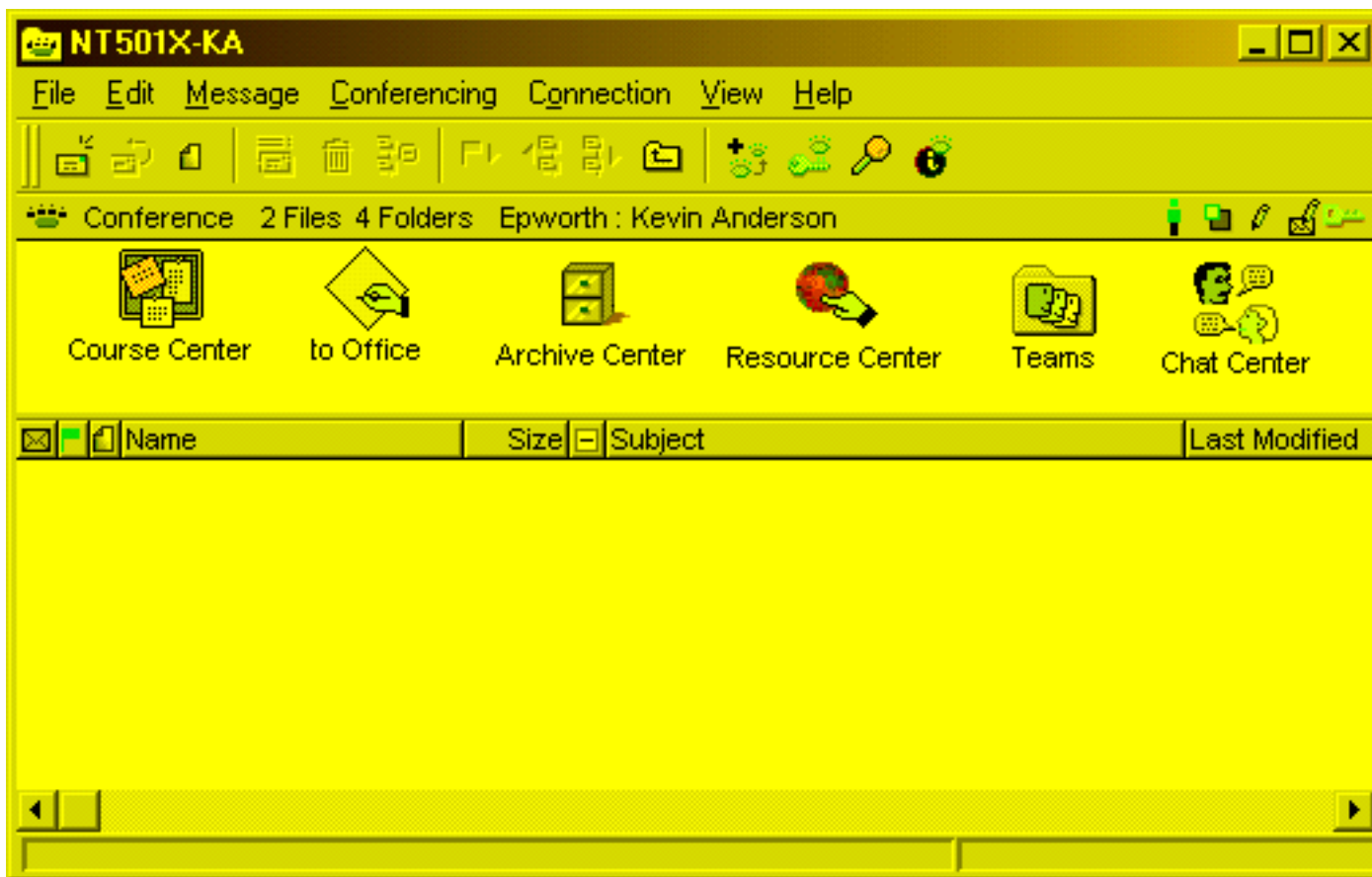
An introduction to (1) the literature of the New Testament in its socio-historical, literary and canonical contexts; and (2) critical study of the New Testament.

Course Objectives

Having completed this course, students should be able:

- (1) to articulate how one's beliefs about Scripture impinge on how one engages biblical texts in interpretation;
- (2) to identify a range of questions (e.g., historical, literary, canonical) that might be addressed to particular New Testament texts and explore those questions in the process of interpreting particular New Testament texts;
- (3) to identify significant, critical resources for New Testament study and deploy those sources critically in New Testament study;
- (4) to probe the interplay of theology and ethics in the various New Testament writers;
- (5) to demonstrate awareness of the significance of the original languages for understanding and interpreting the New Testament; and
- (6) to integrate these concerns and methodologies in a sound hermeneutical method.

Windows, Icons and Course Navigation:



The Course Center will contain a copy of the course syllabus and course modules. This is the starting point for most class directions. No interaction takes place here but this is where I will be posting course material

The Discussion Center is the unlabeled bottom half of the window, such as above, and it will be used for all *public*, class communication. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the modules, the assignments, or anything else which would be of interest to me or your classmates, you should post to the Discussion Center.

The NT520 Office is for *private* correspondence between you and the professor. This will contain items that you do not want to appear publicly before all of your classmates. This is the icon you should click on to send personal correspondence directly to me. Once the semester begins, please discontinue addressing class related messages to my ATS email but rather use this icon exclusively. This is also the icon you will click to submit coursework including assignments, papers, projects, and personal correspondence. This should not be used to ask general course-related questions.

The Archives Center will be used for storing conversations that have already taken place during the course of the semester. As the Discussion Center begins to fill up with our

threaded discussions I will periodically archive the older part of the discussion in the Archives center. This keeps the Discussion Center from becoming too unmanageable and will speed up down load time when dialing in to FirstClass. You will not be able to post within this section but you will have access to the archived discussions. Please feel free to refer to previous messages which have already been archived.

The Chat Center is intended primarily for real-time interaction among students. You can get together with other members to study, ask questions, or to explore topics. *Remember:* None of the conversations carried on in this location are ever saved.

The Teams folder is where the class will periodically work collaboratively in smaller groups on certain assignments.

The Resource Center provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL students. These include access to the B.L. Fisher Library, chapel services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, Guidelines for Success, Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a PowerPoint Viewer, and a Real Audio Player.

Expectations:

What you can expect of me:

1. Prompt replies to your questions and postings. Typically this should be by the end of the next day I have scheduled online office hours.
2. Interaction, participation, and direction in the ongoing discussions that will occur over the course of the semester.
3. Timely and substantive feedback on your assignments. For example, when one assignment builds on a previous assignment, you will have received back the first assignment before the second is due. I will strive to make my comments substantive by affirming what you have done well and underscoring areas for improvement.
4. Occasional adjustments in that this is my first ExL class and I am adjusting to this mode of teaching and means of interacting.
5. My genuine enthusiasm for this material and my excitement about what we will be learning.

What I can expect of you:

1. Active and engaged participation in our online discussions, in the Discussion Center and in your Team Folder.
2. Timely completion of assignments.
3. Your honest questions when you don't understand the material or the instructions. I always know what I mean when I give instructions, but if you do not understand them, I need to make adjustments.
4. Your patience as we work together in this medium.
5. Your willingness to engage in material that may stretch and challenge you.
6. Your willingness to entertain and engage different perspectives on their own terms in a non-dismissive manner. The purpose of this course is not for you to know what I think about various New Testament texts but to develop the ability to look at the text, consider

the viewpoints of others, and reach a conclusion—though you may decide on some points that you are ready to make a decision, which is perfectly acceptable!.

What to expect from this course:

This course offers a basic introduction to the history, culture and content of the New Testament. We will focus on how the message of the New Testament was shaped, influenced, and heard within its original cultural and historical contexts and we will grapple with the interplay of culture, theology, and ethics.

As a survey of the New Testament, this course rapidly covers a lot of ground. In addition to reading the New Testament in its entirety, there will be a good deal of required reading, particularly early on in the course. No doubt the nature of this reading will stretch you, both in terms of the amount covered and in terms of the challenging ideas and information in the works themselves. Nevertheless, this reading will lay a vital foundation for much of our class discussion and “hands on” interpretive work. Please make a commitment to set aside ample time to stay on schedule with your reading. I would also suggest picking up a copy of Patzia and Petrotta’s *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*, listed in our recommended bibliography, to help you with any unfamiliar terms or concepts encountered in your reading.

This is a rigorous course (not too rigorous I hope!!), so please be sure to keep on schedule with your work. If you get behind, it may be a challenge to keep up. The general guideline is that you will be spending around ten to twelve hours per week on this class, and it is my goal to abide by that guideline.

Course Guidelines:

Postings: Postings in the Discussion Center should strive for substantive engagement without being excessive. As a rule of thumb, your postings should fall in the range of 50 to 75 words. Postings should be at least 50 words in length. Each week’s assignments run from 8:00 A.M. Tuesday to 8:00 a.m. on the following Tuesday. (Since I live in California, most, if not all, times given are Pacific Standard Time) In a typical week I will be posting an initial question or assignment to the class by 8:00 Tuesday morning. You will need to post one substantive response to my initial question/assignment for that week and two substantive responses to your classmate's postings for that week in the Discussion Center. You must post your initial response to my question/assignment by Friday 5:00 P.M.. All students are expected to read ALL the initial posts of the class. Watch the discussion as it unfolds and then jump in again at some point with your responses. Substantial responses will demonstrate some critical reflection and content in relation to the question or posting being addressed. Hence, three postings per module is just the MINIMUM requirement to fulfill this part of the course. Additional postings are always welcomed and encouraged.

When you post your "first" message, i.e. your own contribution to the discussion, please post it as a NEW message. In the Subject header, use the following form:

QUESTION # YOURLASTNAME

If I were posting my first response, the subject header would read
Question 1 Litwak

When you reply to a colleague's message, please use the "Reply" command. It will subordinate your reply to the one you are answering, making it possible to read the discussion in sequence.

Grammar and English Usage: Proper English grammar should be used at all times. Please always incorporate complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and correct spelling. Poor grammar will be reflected in the final grade. Granted, communication in the Discussion Center will certainly be more conversational and spontaneous. Nevertheless, we should aim for clarity and precision in all of our communication. This is particularly important given the constraints of online communication.

Discussion: A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

Course Requirements:

The assignments in this course are meant both to introduce you to foundational concepts and skills and to build toward integration in your final research paper. That is, we will develop interpretive skills for engaging our primary text, the New Testament, and critical skills for engaging secondary literature, our course texts. These will both be integrated in our final research assignment which will incorporate both of these skills.

Preparation and Participation: Students should prepare for each module by completing all biblical and other readings and actively participating in group discussions and/or team assignments. Your participation grade will be based upon *quality* of participation in online discussions, and evidence of appropriate preparation. Your comments should give evidence of careful thought about the topic of discussion or question posed and careful reading of class sources.

Quantity of interaction will only prove relevant in terms of the *depth* of your treatment of the topic. Quantity just for quantity's sake or at the expense of quality should be avoided. In short, think through the issue and think about what others—your professor, your classmates and other authors—have said about the subject.

In my own assessment I will attend to the following: Have you posted the minimum three postings per assignment? How many total postings did you make per module? How many were significant and substantive postings? How well did you respond when

questions were posed to you by the professor or other students? Did your postings show evidence of interacting with course readings? (20%)

General Note on Written, Submitted Work

1. For the benefit of the instructor, all written, submitted assignments must use a font like Arial and be in 12-point type. Work submitted in Times New Roman or 10-point type will receive less credit. I have to be able to read it.

2. Exegesis papers and other materials that require documentation must follow formatting guidelines for Turabian, found in

Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (10th ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

The use of Slade is an Asbury standard, so if you have not used it before, you likely will do so more in the future. However, it is easy to find online examples of Turabian style. There is a document in the Course Center entitled "Style Guides," which also provides links and information.

Critical Book Review: Each student will write a critical book review. The book review (Due 10/13/2004 8 A.M. PST) is to be on either deSilva, Gozalesez, or Green. Reviews should be 1,000-1,250 words in length (4-5 pages), typed, and double-spaced. These will be submitted to the NT520 Office. Please follow the guidelines for writing critical book reviews as found in the Course Center in the Guidelines Folder. (= 10%)

Interpretive Assignments: For (at least) two of the eight interpretive assignments, the student will prepare an interpretive assignment. Each close reading should be 750-1,000 words (3-4 pages). Your observations should always be supported by reference to the passage under consideration and your work should be carefully written with attention to grammar and spelling. However, these essays are *not* intended to be research assignments. Hence, consultation of secondary materials is not allowed. Nor are they intended to be *application papers* or *sermons*. Rather, they should give evidence a close reading of the assigned New Testament text, attending to literary form and structure, with sensitivity to social, cultural, historical and theological issues. Interpretive Assignments are NEVER accepted late. If you do not have it in on time, then you will have to do a different one. Remember you have at least eight opportunities to complete the necessary three assignments. However, I would encourage you to do one of the first two assignments so that I can begin to give you feedback early on. Please follow the handouts and guidelines for writing interpretive assignments as found in the Course Center in the Guidelines Folder. (3 x 10% = 20%).

Team Exegesis Presentation: Each team will create an exegesis presentation. *Due 11/25/04, 8 AM PST) The preferred format is Powerpoint, but HTML or PDF are acceptable. The components of the presentation include:

1. Overview of the historical, cultural, social and literary background of the assigned text (at least two pages)
2. Discussion of the exegetical/theological problems presented by the text, including major views, if appropriate (at least two pages)
3. Your team's interpretation of the text (at least two pages)

4. Application to ministry (at least one page)

For each of these components, which present high-level elements, each team will submit a two- to four-page handout, in which you provide a detailed "script." Imagine that you are required to present this material in person. Once assignments are graded, they will be placed in the course folder for others to see if they wish. Each one of these must be written by a different team member, and should have the team member's name on it.

Grading. The grading for this project will be based upon three things:

- a. Content and quality of the presentation and supporting documents
- b. Substantive contribution to team discussion on project
- c. Team member evaluations (each team member will be asked to rate the participation of other team members)

Exegetical Paper and/or Project: This will be a 2500-3000 word (10-12 pages) research paper typed, double-spaced, with appropriate notes and bibliography (the appropriate number of sources is the amount needed to adequately cover your chosen topic; there is a limit of 3 *scholarly* internet sources), presenting an interpretation of a New Testament passage chosen from among your interpretive assignments. This essay should exhibit *both* a close reading of the New Testament text(s) selected for study (as in the Interpretive Assignments, above) *and* critical engagement with fellow interpreters of the NT (as in the Critical Review Assignments, above--e.g., commentaries, special studies, articles). Students are encouraged to discuss their projects beforehand with the instructor and to peruse other bibliographical tools for relevant secondary literature. **Papers are due on 12/15 5 p.m. PST (30%)**

When submitting your assignments as an attachment please follow the format as outlined here: Your last name followed by IA for Interpretive Assignment followed by the number, 1,2, 3, etc., BR for Book Review followed by the number 1 or 2, and RP for Research Paper. For example, if I were turning in my first interpretive assignment using an attachment I would call it LitwakIA#1. If I were turning in my first book review I would label the attachment LitwakBR#1. Additionally, messages sent to me and message threads should always have an accurately filled Subject line. Your assistance in this manner will go a long way toward helping manage and organize the course. Also, please keep a copy of all of your assignments until your final grade is issued.

Grading:

Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 24):

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives

B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

A plus (+) or minus (-) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C- = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

Incompletes: “A grade of ‘I’ denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment” (*Catalog*, 29). I know that all of us feel overworked and face a variety time related pressures, but please note that this policy is strictly adhered to. Plan accordingly.

The Bottom Line: What this means, according to the Dean, is that if you do what I ask, and do a good job on it, that is a B, not an A.

Specific Grading Policies for NT520:

1. You may complete as many Interpretive Assignments as you wish and I will assign your grade based upon your top three assignments. However, Interpretive Assignments will not be accepted late.
2. Other late papers will not receive written comments and will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade per day late. For example, a “B” paper will become a “B-“ if a day late.
3. Poor grammar and spelling will have an effect on your final grade.
4. I do not grade on a curve. I grade by strict percentages.

90-100%=A

80-89%=B

70-79%=C

69-69%=D

Below 60%: don't go there.

Incompletes: If you get into a situation in which you think that you will not be able to complete the course work, you may be tempted to request an incomplete. This means that you need to finish your course work after the course is over. I strongly recommend against this option. First, I have seen more than one student go from an I to an F because they never finished their work. According to the catalog, an incomplete will only be granted in case of an unavoidable emergency, and this decision is at the discretion of the Dean. "Unavoidable emergency," as defined in the catalog, does not include too much other work, computer crashes, funerals, or other events that might interfere with your course work. If you think you might need such an option, it would be better to withdraw and take the course again at another time. This should be done before the deadline for withdrawing because if you are past that deadline, you will receive an F that will remain on your record even if you take the course at another time and get a better grade. So, I urge you to plan on making time right now for this course.

Required Reading:

A modern translation of the Bible, preferably the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the English Standard Version (ESV), or the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Achtemeier, Paul J., Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Message*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2001.

deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament*

Culture. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2000.
Gorman, Michael J., *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishes, 2001.
Theissen, Gerd. *The Shadow of the Galilean*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987.

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Recommended Reading:

Green, Joel B., ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1995.
Camery-Hoggart, Jerry. *Speaking of God: Reading and Preaching the Word of God*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995.
Gonzalez, Justo L. *Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002. *I would highly recommend this for concise definitions of unfamiliar terms you may encounter in your required course readings.*
Jeffers, James. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.

Recommended Reference Works:

Green, Joel B., and Scot McKnight, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1992.
Martin, Ralph P., Gerald Hawthorne, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1993.
Martin, Ralph P., and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1997.
Evans, Craig A., and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2000.
Freedman, David N., ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

All of the above are also available in the Logos Library System accessible through Prolepsis on FirstClass.

Course Schedule:

MODULE ONE: THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 9/7-13 | The World of the New Testament (1).
Assignment: <i>Introducing the New Testament</i> (hereafter <i>INT</i>), ch. 1;
Begin reading deSilva. |
| 9/14-20 | The World of the New Testament (2).
Assignment: <i>INT</i> , ch. 2; Finish reading deSilva; Begin reading Gorman. |

MODULE TWO: MODELS AND METHODS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- 9/21-27 Models for Understanding the World of the New Testament.
Assignment: *INT*, ch. 25; Continue reading Gorman.
- 9/28-10/4 Methods for Understanding the World of the New Testament.
Finish reading Gorman; Begin reading Theissen.

MODULE THREE: JESUS AND THE GOSPELS

- 10/5-11 The Gospel Writers as Interpreters of Jesus.
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 3, 4; Finish reading Theissen.
New Testament Reading: Matthew
- 10/12-18 Jesus and the Kingdom of God.
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 5, 8
New Testament Reading: Mark
Interpretive Assignment 1: Mark 1:1-15.
- 10/19-25 Luke-Acts.
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 6, 9; Begin reading Jeffers.
New Testament Reading: Luke & Acts
Interpretive Assignment 2: Luke 19:1-10.
- 10/25-31 The Gospel and Letters of John
Assignment: *INT*, ch. 7, 23; Continue reading Jeffers
New Testament Reading: John, 1-3 John
Interpretive Assignment 3: John 9:1-41.
Critical Book Review: Due 10/27 9 a.m. PST

MODULE FOUR: PAUL AND HIS LETTERS

- 11/1-7 Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation.
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 10, 11, 12 (and 17 on Philemon); Finish reading Jeffers.
New Testament Reading: Romans, Philemon
Interpretive Assignment 4: Philemon.
- 11/8-14 The Corinthian Correspondence.
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 13-16
New Testament Reading: 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians.
Interpretive Assignment 5: 1 Cor 11:17-34.

11/15-21 The "Pastoral" Epistles.
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 17-19
New Testament Reading: Colossians,
1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus
Interpretive Assignment 6: 1 Tim 2:9-15.

Team Exegesis Presentation due 11/28

11/22-28 Fall Reading Week
Team Exegesis Presentation due 11/28

MODULE FIVE: LATER NEW TESTAMENT FAITH

11/29-12/5 James and Peter
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 20-22
New Testament Reading: Hebrews, James 1 Peter
Interpretive Assignment 7: James 4:13-5:6.

12/6-12 Revelation
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 23, 24, 25
New Testament Reading: 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation
Interpretive Assignment 8: Revelation 5.

12/15 Semester Ends: **Final Paper: Due 5 p.m.**

ExL Support Team:

For technical difficulties with FirstClass, contact Jared Porter, ExL Support, at
ExL_Support@asburyseminary.edu

For general concerns, questions, or problems email ExL_Director@asburyseminary.edu

For **library research support**, contact Information Commons at
Information_Commons@asburyseminary.edu

Bookstore: exlbooks@asburyseminary.edu

Regardless of your computer, we are all very well supported by our support staff. Please keep me apprised if there are instructions that don't seem to make sense as you look at your computer screen (after trying to figure them out for a reasonable amount of time) and let me know if there are documents which you are unable to read or open.

Obtaining Library Materials and Reference Assistance

Email: Ats_Reference@asburyseminary.edu

Toll-Free Reference Help Line: 1-866-454-2733

ExL students are encouraged to make use of local libraries, if possible. However, Library services are always available to students through Asbury's B. L. Fisher Library. All requests for books and journal articles should be e-mailed to the Reference Desk (ATS_Reference@asburyseminary.edu). The Reference workers (Hannah, Robbie, and Nina) will also assist ExL students with reference requests, using various online databases, or doing research on a specific topic. For **library loans**, contact Dot James at Dot_James@asburyseminary.edu.

“The development of this extended learning syllabus is intended for distribution to members of the course and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the internet. Permission to copy, in whole or in part, must be requested from the professor (Kenneth Litwak).